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An Autumn near the Rhine; or Sketches of courts, society, scenery, &c. in some of the German states bordering on the Rhine

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London, 1818

Letter XVI.

[urn:nbn:de:bsz:31-120472](https://nbn-resolving.org/urn:nbn:de:bsz:31-120472)

LETTER XVI.

TAKING leave of our hospitable friends, we departed the morning after the Baron's ball for Stutgard. The road presented few interesting objects. We passed Durlach, the capital of the old Margraviate of Baden-Durlach; the Castle half in ruins from the French devastation of the country in 1689. On stopping at an inn in a village, the busy assemblage of peasants announced the *Kirch weihe*, or commemoration of the consecration of the church — celebrated in the Protestant German villages, like an English wake, by dancing and rejoicings, frequently kept up for two or three days and nights without ceasing. An immense Maypole, an invariable object in a German village, on these occasions is crowned with evergreens and ribbands, round which the peasants dance. The chief scenes of festivity, however, are some of the cottages, and little

inns, or beer-houses, where beer and wine assert their joviality.

After several leagues of dreary sequestered road through a corn country, intermixed with woods, we came to Pforzheim, situated in a deep but not picturesque valley. The town, once considerable, as the capital of the Princes of Pforzheim, ancestors of the Duke of Baden, is dismal and deserted, — slightly enlivened by a trade in watches and jewellery. We dined at a shabby inn, where, as is often the case, the cleanliness and neatness with which dinner was served were contrasted with the smoky walls of the saloon, and darkness and dirt of the house. A clean napkin and silver forks were not forgotten. The former is an invariable, and the latter a common luxury in very humble inns. I have sometimes seen silver forks in company with pewter plates. In the inns, and even in the houses of the upper classes, they are rarely cleaned, because, as a lady of rank explained it to a friend of mine, rubbing makes them thinner and lighter! the ostentatious solidity of plate being considered well purchased at the expense of

cleanliness. At a German dinner, even at Court, where gold and silver generally abound, one knife and fork invariably serves for the sweets, sours, and savouries of the twenty or thirty dishes of which most persons partake.

A good-looking young German sat by me very intent on a novel of Augustus La Fontaine, the Kotzebue of German novelists, both in popularity and prolificness. His works occupy three or four of the most thumbed pages in the catalogue of every circulating library, and, with abundance of German sentiment, have often a pleasing and natural vein of feeling.

After driving through a dreary country, now and then varied by a hill, covered with thin withered-looking vineyards, we entered the kingdom of Wirtemberg, announced by a handsome little pillar at the frontier. On stopping at the next *Chaussee Geld* (turnpike) house, we were surprised by a demand from a cocked-hatted collector for the sum of four *florins*, (near eight shillings,) instead of a few *kreutzers* as usual; but we found that the payment of it was to exempt us from all similar demands on the roads in the kingdom, there being no turnpikes but

at the frontier. The roads in Wirtemberg are some of the best in Germany — sometimes little inferior to our own turnpike roads.

The entrance from one little State to another, though not marked by the striking differences in habits and manners which you would observe on going out of Germany into a foreign country, is always, however, announced by some little variations which strike the eye of the traveller, and which sometimes give indications of the relative consequence of the two principalities. The uniform of the postillions changes at the first Post, and the *schwager* of the larger state is smarter and better mounted than his brethren in the smaller. In Baden they wear buff coats turned up with red, and the whole equipage is as much superior to those of Hesse, as the red coats, long yellow mantles, and clever horses of the Wirtemberg boys are to those of Baden. The postillion has a large bugle horn slung over his shoulder, which he often winds on entering a town with great skill and harmony. When you have four horses they ride one of the hinder ones, and drive the leaders with a whip

whose crack is terrific, having no idea of driving four from the seat. The coachman of the young Duke of Anhalt-Cöthen used occasionally to attempt this, in a style that made me tremble for His Highness's neck, and clearly manifested that Germany had not yet attained to the valuable institution of a Whip Club. Handsome mile-stones now for the first time regularly marked the *stunden* on the road. The royal arms at the post-houses had something of the splendour of English signs; and the names of every parish and *bailliage* were printed in respectable German characters on handsome posts by the road side. It was clear we were now in the kingdom of Wirtemberg, the sixth power in the Serene German Confederation.

Entzweihingen is the only place of any consequence between Pforzheim and Stuttgart. It is an old walled town on the River Entz, along the bank of which the road runs for a short distance before entering it. The Castle standing on an abrupt little mountain, planted with vineyards, just above the town and river, was once the residence of two brother flowers of chivalry, concerning

whom traditions are still extant in the neighbourhood. While the postillion stopped, according to custom, to give his horses some sour brown bread, a diet which is said to have the happy effect of making them *hitzig*, (fiery,) we took coffee in the inn. The landlord, a formal sort of prig, attacked us with the inquisitiveness which you so often encounter in a German inn, where the country, the route, and the views of a traveller are frequently the only objects that rouse the phlegm of the host. As I spoke bad German tolerably fluently, the first question sometimes paid me the compliment of taking me for a Westphalian, where I conclude they speak nearly equally ill. Our host, however, with more discernment, began, "*Mit erlaubniss. sie sind kein geborne Deutscher?*" (*With permission, you are no born German?*) "*Perhaps a Dutchman? — a Frenchman?*" — my answering to which in a short monosyllable gave him a moment's pause; after which, he ventured a diffident negative, ushered in by a profusion of "forgivenesses" and "pardons," "*Meinherr is no Swiss.*" My gratification of his curiosity as to my country

naturally drew it forth as to a hundred other matters. "*I beg pardon; you are in mourning. Perhaps for a parent? — not so? — or a relation? With pardon, do you lodge at Stutgard at the King of Wirtemberg? or, perhaps, the Roman Emperor? A right good house, sumptuous table: — host a right reasonable man: — my good friend: — With forgiveness, if you mention the Herr Müller, at the Black Eagle, Weihingen, you will be well received.*" With this sort of officious loquacity, accompanied by an abundance of formal bows, mine host attended us to the calèche door, which he shut, pouring forth a volley of "farewells," "prosperous journeys," and "speedy arrivals."

We arrived in the middle of the night at Stutgard, and found the much recommended host and household of the Roman Emperor asleep; but a bed-room, with less than the modicum of comfort generally to be found in that apartment in a German inn, ready for late arrivers.

The *locale* of Stutgard is as dull and uninteresting as can well be imagined. I saw no town in Germany where the streets,

the buildings, the objects, without being mean — and some of them, indeed, are handsome — had so much of that uniform mediocrity of character, which produces *ennui* by dint of never interesting. One long wide street, dignified since the modern honours of the house of Wirtemberg by the title of *Königs-Strasse*, (*King-Street*,) traverses the town, from the gate leading to Tübingen to the Ludwigsburg, — now the *King's-Gate* — a modern massy portal — near which the *Königs-Strasse* is handsomely and regularly built. One side is occupied by some of the best houses in Stuttgart, among which are the residences of our Ambassador, and several of the *corps diplomatique*; and the other by the splendid range of royal stables — a building which an ignorant person might often in Germany take for the Palace. The town stands in a narrow hollow, hemmed in on all sides by mountains of no great height, and which would be infinitely more picturesque if the sameness of their unvaried vineyards was relieved by trees, and other sorts of vegetation. For want of this the mountains are dreary, and the vineyards

far from cheerful. This situation of the place exposes it to frequent rain and fogs, and renders the picturesque scenery of the neighbourhood by no means easily accessible.

In these little Residence-Towns—if the metropolis of the kingdom of Wirtemberg, with its 20,000 souls, will not be offended at the title—all that is handsome or striking is modern. The modern buildings generally bespeak the increased and growing splendour of the Prince and his state; and you may accurately trace in the date and appearance of the architecture and embellishments, their gradation from the old humble regime of Margraves, Landgraves, and Counts of the Empire, first to that of Electors, and then to the splendid independence of Grand Dukes and Kings. The Princes are evidently making the most of the leisure—it cannot yet be said the wealth—procured by peace, to bring up arrears, and to put things on a corresponding level with the eminence they have gained by such rapid strides. New churches, new stables, new *corps de garde*, new streets, are building in their capitals, which give to them a pushing,

upstart, *parvenu* character, which, however inferior to the mellowed respectability of years, is the only one of any interest they have to present. Antiquity is here far too much connected with insignificance to offer any attractions. To trace a majestic stream to its source among the rude and grand features of nature, is an interesting occupation; but no one cares to follow a rivulet back to a puddle. The decay of grandeur has a melancholy but deep interest; but all that is old, in these duodecimo capitals, bears the stamp of a system more petty than that which exists. Mean streets, insignificant public buildings, without traditional interest, all remind one how much less a personage the Count was a few centuries ago than the king of to-day. This absence of all historical interest, is one of the circumstances, though not the most sensibly felt by every person, which contributes to the torpid want of interest of a small German capital as a place of residence. America has been said to be a country without associations; and the little German States are nearly in the same predicament—for they have none worth recurring to.

The palace at Stutgard is, upon the whole, not unworthy of royalty — that is, of the royalty of Wirtemberg — for in England, if the building would bear a comparison with some second-rate noblemen's seats, it is certainly some degrees behind the massive splendour of Blenheim or Arundel. It stands just out of the Königs-Strasse, screened behind a little grove of large trees which block up the view of the building. It is a modern, stone edifice, completed by the late King, the front occupying three sides of a square — the parapets decorated with handsome statues, and the centre of the roof surmounted by an enormous gilt crown and cushion, which would make an admirable sign for a flashy hotel by the road-side. “*On est toujours fier de ce qu'on ne possède que depuis peu,*” said a shrewd German lady to me, in pointing to it; and her remark was justified by several of the splendid audience-rooms, whose walls are studded with this pompous decoration surmounting the arms of the family.

The interior of the palace is unquestionably splendid. — Ostentation and costliness are visible in every chair, sofa, mirror, table,

or time-piece. This ornament is all gold—that solid silver—this cost so many thousand florins—His late Majesty gave so many more for that. There is scarcely any thing more humble than rosewood, satin, porcelain, and porphyry. This crowd of luxury, often united with good taste, which generally adorns rooms of very moderate size, is chiefly owing to the magnificence of his late Majesty, whose indisputable connoisseurship in matters of royal pomp was rather unfortunate for his subjects. Several of the rooms of the palace are adorned with splendid tapestries, from the Gobelins at Paris, presents from Napoleon to his royal and humble ally, the late king—and among the rooms, pointed out as remarkable, are those once or twice occupied by the fallen Emperor, the Empress Maria Louisa, his Majesty of Russia, the Duke of Cambridge, and other distinguished characters, besides that in which the king died in October, 1816.

With the exception of some cabinet pictures of the Flemish school, one or two statues by Canova and other artists, the monuments of the fine arts are all of native

growth — for in encouraging the artists of his little kingdom, the late king showed some true notions of royal splendour, which, if they had not been confined to mere decoration and embellishment, would have led him to extend his protection to commerce as the best basis of magnificence, instead of oppressing it from childish prejudices against all that was not showy and glittering. He sometimes came to the sensible resolution, not to have a merchant worth 100 florins a-year in his dominions.

Stutgard has been, for some years, a considerable centre of the fine arts.—Danekker, to whom it is scarcely a compliment to call him the Canova of Germany, is a native and resident of the place. The palace is adorned by various exquisite little pieces, chiefly from his chisel — and his rooms, which I visited, contain many more. He had just finished a noble colossal head of Schiller — a bust of the late king, who had a striking physiognomy, with no slight resemblance to our revered sovereign — and a small statue of Love, one of the softest and most delicate morsels of sculpture I ever saw. The works of Danekker are

generally distinguished from Canova's by a less prominent infusion of the ideal — a more close embodying of simple forms of nature. This is managed with such excellent taste and so nice a sense of grace and beauty, that it only renders them more touching — more what every one can feel and delight in — without giving them the least approach to homeliness or want of grace. He had no work at Stutgard equal to his Ariadne, at Frankfort; but genius of the same character was distinguishable in most of them — the same harmonious grace of composition and delicate execution, the same soft round contours and tenderness of expression, the same admirable blending of the poetry of the art with touching truth of representation. The palace is also ornamented with a variety of pieces by the Messrs. Court Painters, Hetsch and Seele, some of them of unquestionable merit — elaborately designed and highly finished — but frequently cold in colouring, and mannered, and academical in character. They are painters of considerable reputation in

Germany, and were most liberally encouraged by the late king.

The gardens, at the back of the palace, are extensive, and laid out partly in the English and partly in the formal French taste. Close to the little terrace on which the palace stands is a large circular opening, cut into parterres and gravel walks, with a large piece of water in the middle stocked with curious aquatic birds — remnants of the zoological mania of the late king. The palace looks across this area up a long vista of road running through the English garden to the Court farms, and the village of Canstadt. The shrubberies, which extend for some distance on each side of this road, are intersected by pleasant serpentine walks which do not disgrace the title of the garden. The court farm and buildings, and a large saloon for public balls and amusements stand at the end of the garden; and the road proceeds through cheerful avenues of dwarf rose trees to Canstadt. There is a double carriage-road and a foot-path on each side; and the police, ever active in small matters, in the small states, carefully prevent any one from

making an exit by the entering road, or *vice versa*. Walking in the high-road is also as much contrary to law as driving on the foot-path; and I incurred a reprimand for this misdemeanour from an old Swiss *gen d'arme*, who parades the gardens in official dignity, with a huge cocked hat, worthy of an old Croix de St. Louis.

Among the police regulations, posted in the Inns, which are very strict as to foreigners, passports, &c. &c. is one which forbids smoking in the street, under penalty of several florins and—“*confiscation of the pipe.*” This harsh edict was published by his late Majesty, who appears to have been so *un-German*, as to resemble our James I. in an antipathy to what the latter used to call the “*Stygian fumes.*” And the sensation the event created in the Capital, at the time, may be imagined from its being recorded in a chronology of the town, where I found it among the visits of foreign Princes and other remarkable events. Another royal edict of his late Majesty prohibited walking in the street at night without a lanthorn — an anxiety for the limbs of his subjects in which more

gigantic sovereigns have been cruelly deficient.

The wide walk, towards Canstadt, in the English Garden, is the favourite promenade of the *beau monde* of Stutgard, and almost the only agreeable one within reach, without climbing the hills. Adjoining the gardens are the Royal Retreat, a neat little country-house, the Royal Bath, and the buildings of the Royal Menagerie — now a tenantless range of stalls, cages, basins, and habitations carefully adapted to the character and dimensions of its late motley inhabitants. The royal favourites were, as may be supposed, lodged with somewhat more luxury than their plebeian relatives in the Strand. They were also far more numerous and curious. The collection was one of the most precious in Europe. The monkey tribe, who excited the especial curiosity of the king, mustered to the number of thirty or forty — scarcely any branch of the amusing family being unrepresented among them. There were generally two or three elephants, Spanish and African sheep, a Nil-Ghau and Conagga, besides the more ordinary animals, small and great, in

cage-fulls. The king used to visit his favourite subjects every day, and feed them with his royal hand. The costs of these playthings were almost incalculable, and their daily devourings of fresh meat, hay, vegetables, &c. &c. were described to me as exceeding imagination. The present king lost no time in dismissing this unfitting troop of consumers, to earn their living, as they ought to do, at the expence of curiosity — and the step must have afforded him some consolation, when his ears were assailed, in the beginning of last year, by the groans of his subjects perishing for want. The distresses occasioned by the failure of the crops were generally severe in this part of Germany; but in Wirtemberg they were felt with extraordinary cruelty.—Every necessary of life was at treble the ordinary price, and persons of affluence could sometimes scarcely, procure them for money. Turkey-corn, which is grown in quantities, for the use of poultry and animals, became the common, but scanty food of the poor; and in the Black Forest many died from famine or diseases brought on by a diet

made of the bark of trees, roots, and other nauseous vegetables. The king was compelled to declare, every Commune responsible for the death occasioned by starvation of any of its inhabitants. The crops of the present year have been abundant and successful; and the first load of corn which entered Stutgard was decorated with flowers, and attended with ceremonials and rejoicings, now represented in prints in the shop windows.

The palace of Stutgard has all the other usual appendages to the residence of a German Sovereign. The Theatre, with the ordinary performances on Sunday, and twice in the week, is a handsome building, terminating one of the wings of the palace, with which the royal box communicates. The King and Queen walk in and amuse themselves unattended, and without any of the state and parade used at the Court of Hesse, and common in the smaller Courts. Their presence is consequently less of a *gene* on the company, and people laugh and admire a little more at ease.

There are two royal libraries at Stutgard, one containing above 150,000 volumes, ill-

arranged, in a large dirty building in the market-place. The greatest curiosity here is the collection of Bibles in all languages, the most complete existing. They are about 3000 in number, besides 6 or 7000 volumes of commentaries and scriptural works. The Bibles came in part from collections at Copenhagen and Nuremberg. The King's private collection, or as it is called, the *Leib Bibliothek*, (the Body Library,) is in one of the wings of the Palace, and possesses nearly half the number of volumes, arranged with care, and continually increased by the addition of all celebrated modern works. I found many English volumes, particularly our large splendid publications connected with the fine arts.

Just by is the *Leib Stall*, or Body Stables, a distinct establishment from the *Marstall*, or Court Stables. The latter contain the horses in the general use of the Royal family, and officers of the Court, of which I counted about 200. The Body Stables are merely for the horses used by the Sovereign's own august person and those of his equerries—these were about 100. Horses are the

ruling passion, and almost the only luxurious expense of the present King. His Majesty sometimes mounts a dozen in a day, and the ceremonies of lunging, dressing, and rough-riding are continually going on near the palace. Horse-breaking and riding are made much more of sciences in Germany than with us. Every one who mounts a horse thinks it necessary to ride like a dragoon; and his horse must be as supple and as dextrous as if he was to manœuvre in the ranks. The young bucks learn to ride in the Prince's *manege*, and not to hold yourself in all paces as square and erect as if you were armed *cap-a-pie* for a charge, is the height of unhorsemanlike ignorance. I have seen His Excellency the Prince's Equerry, by dint of whip and spur, making a poor foaming animal repeat a pretty sidle, which he did not perform quite correctly, for half an hour together. Every *bourgeois* long-tailed nag, too, is caparisoned *à la militaire*, and ambles and cuts *capriolets* under his stately master like the palfrey of a field-officer. German horses are hard dull animals, capable of much work, and not to be

spoiled by this discipline: but it is found lost labour when tried on English ones, which are much in request, and vastly superior in spirit and shape to the natives. The Mecklenburgh horses are the best in Germany, most resembling ours.